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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - CROSS-STRAIT TALKS, TAIWAN-JAPAN DISPUTE

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies June 14-16 gave extensive coverage to the rising diplomatic row between Taiwan and Japan over a collision between a Taiwan fishing boat and a Japanese frigate in the disputed waters around the Tiaoyutai Islands last Tuesday. News coverage also focused on agreements signed between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) in Beijing last Thursday, following a decade-long hiatus in talks between SEF and ARATS. The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" ran a banner headline on page four on June 14 reading "For the First Time Hu [Jintao] Has Given Orders to Speed up Negotiations over Taiwan's [Elbow] Room in the International Community."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" criticized the agreement signed between SEF and ARATS in Beijing and said it will jeopardize Taiwan's arms procurement with the United States, its foreign relations and eventually, Taiwan's sovereignty. An editorial in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" praised the talks between SEF and ARATS and urged Ma's administration to get ready as cross-strait relations enter a new phase. A separate "China Times" op-ed said the resumption of dialogue between SEF and ARATS has been successful, but both Taiwan and China have to be aware that the challenges lying ahead might have an impact on improved cross-strait relations. An op-ed in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" said Taiwan's expectations for greater international space cannot simply rely on China's goodwill. With regard to the dispute between Taiwan and Japan over the Tiaoyutai Islands, a "Liberty Times" op-ed discussed the United States' role in the Tiaoyutai Islands controversy and said Taiwan's remarks about going to war with Japan over the Tiaoyutai Islands indicated that it would not hesitate to declare war against the "U.S.-Japan alliance." An editorial in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" cited the controversy over the Tiaoyutai Islands and cautioned the Ma administration to maintain balance in its relations with Washington, Tokyo and Beijing and not to become lopsided toward China. A "China Times" op-ed urged the Ma administration to carefully handle the controversy over the Tiaoyutai Islands and take the U.S.-Japan security alliance and cross-strait relations into consideration.
End summary.

¶3. Cross-Strait Talks

A) "The SEF-ARATS Beijing Agreement Is the Start of Taiwan Opening Its Door and Inviting the Thief in"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (6/14):

"... What is more noteworthy is that the peaceful atmosphere deliberately created for the white-glove meetings between the governments of both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] has generated immediate and evidently unfavorable results for Taiwan. Big countries in the international community, such as the United States, Japan and the European Union, have all expressed positive responses

to the cross-Strait talks. But since the situation across the Taiwan Strait has alleviated, China has naturally taken advantage of [the current situation] and requested that the United States permanently cease its arms sales to Taiwan. Not only did some scholars in the United States assert that Washington should postpone the sales of advanced weaponry, such as the F-16 fighter jets, to Taiwan for a year, but also there were messages from Washington officials saying that the major U.S. arms sales to Taiwan will be postponed and determined only after the new U.S. president is elected. What is more absurd is that a recent 'Washington Post' report said the Taiwan side has privately asked the U.S. government not to send the notifications [of the arms procurement package to Taiwan] in the next few weeks so as not to affect Taiwan's negotiations with China. The Ma administration must clarify this 'evil deed' that it has committed upon itself in the pursuit of unpractical economic interests. Also, similar [negative] consequences from the international community included [reports saying that] given Taiwan's proactive efforts to reconcile with China, Taiwan's diplomatic allies in Latin America, such as Nicaragua, are concerned and closely monitoring the change of attitude on Taiwan's part and may adjust [its relations with Taiwan] accordingly.

"In addition to the impact on [Taiwan's] arms deals and foreign relations caused by the false impression that the island is reconciling with China, the Taiwan people's weakened alertness [against China] is another serious price Taiwan has to pay. Even though the idea of a new, straighter air route [across the Taiwan Strait] was not included in the SEF-ARATS talks in Beijing this time, the mentality behind such an idea is debatable. The idea of adopting a new, straighter air route across the Taiwan Strait is akin to putting the shortened time of flight ahead of Taiwan's air defense needs, a move that will surely and evidently reduce the time for Taiwan to react to air threats from China. Such a mentality of

paying attention to only minor benefits but turning a blind eye to [the island's] national security will likely result in the consequence that Taiwan's sovereignty will eventually become expendable. ..."

B) "Looking Forward to Seeing Both Sides of the Strait Walk on the New Road of Stable Interaction Starting Now"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (6/14):

"... Another level of 'pragmatism' is visible, judging from the level of representatives sent by both sides of the Strait. During the negotiation ten years ago, [Taiwan's] Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) officials all stayed behind and had to concentrate on waiting for [Taiwan's] Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) representatives' reports. As a result, during the negotiations, not only representatives of both sides across the Strait had to face off, but also SEF and MAC had to wrestle back and forth. Nowadays, MAC officials all sit at the negotiation table in the capacities of advisor or experts. Negotiations this time were no different from 'official negotiations' except for the capacities of representatives of both sides of the Strait. Once the mode of 'officials negotiating in their capacities of civilians' is assured, the future mode of dialogue across the Strait is decided. The mode of negotiations from both sides of the Strait in the future will be a quasi-official dialogue with SEF as the base, and will transcend the mode of using SEF as a cover-up, as was done in the old days. ..."

C) "A Small Step for SEF and ARATS, but a Big Step for Cross-Strait Relations"

Chao Chun-shan, a Professor of the Graduate Institute of China Studies at Taiwan's Tamkang University, opined in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (6/14):

"In terms of the international community, the attitudes of the United States and Japan have decisive influence [on the development of cross-Strait relations]. They expect both sides of the Strait to hold dialogue to assure peace and security in the region. However, based on their individual interests, neither [the United States nor Japan] want to see the development of a cross-Strait relationship derailed from a track under their control. There is a delicate

change in the trilateral relations among Taiwan, Japan and China because of the incident in which a Taiwan fishing boat was hit by a Japanese frigate and sank off the waters around the Tiaoyutai Islands....The controversy [over the collision in the Tiaoyutai Island waters], which involved the issue of sovereignty, is difficult to put aside for now because it happened unexpectedly. ..."

D) "Don't Leave Our Future in Hands of Beijing"

Chiang Huang-chih, an Associate Professor at National Taiwan University's College of Law, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (6/15):

"... Cross-strait relations is an important issue that must be dealt with. China has delivered 'goodwill' messages on Taiwan's WHO membership bid, but it would be premature and unwise to examine and discuss Taiwan's diplomatic issues within a cross-strait framework because of this single case. If Taiwan's international participation should be decided by China, our so-called 'international space' would be nothing more than a 'cage' within a 'one China' framework, even if the 'motherland' was considering the interests of Taiwanese. Hong Kong and Macau are good examples: Would Taiwanese be happy to see that happen here?

"If Taiwan gave up its diplomatic efforts and failed to accumulate bargaining chips on the international space issue, urgent negotiations with China on diplomatic issues and the hope for seeking international space and dignity with China's goodwill would be nothing but capitulation, or a plea for mercy."

14. Taiwan-Japan Dispute

A) "Declaring War on the U.S.-Japan Alliance?"

Lai I-chung, former director of the DPP's International Affairs Department, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] (6/14):

"... Anyone with common knowledge of international affairs is aware that even though the United States will not step into the dispute between Taiwan and Japan over the Tiaoyutai Islands, it acknowledges that the islands are currently under Japan's jurisdiction. Such an attitude is clearly included in the U.S.-Japan defense treaty and was emphasized [by Washington] in 2004. [The remarks about Taiwan] not ruling out the possibility of going to war with Japan indicated

that [Taiwan] would not hesitate to declare war on the 'U.S.-Japan alliance' over the Tiaoyutai Islands. This is the main reason why the Beijing government has been taking great efforts in restraining its people from acting provocatively over the [controversial] Tiaoyutai Islands issue. Doesn't Ma's administration, which claimed that it has experts specializing in Japanese affairs, know that?"

B) "Walking on a Tight Rope with Balance"

The mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] editorialized (6/16):

"... The controversy [over the Tiaoyutai Islands] will soon vanish like a tempest in a teapot. But the chronic changes in the long run may be more worrisome. It appears that Taiwan is slowly tilting toward China from its [close] relations with the United States and Japan. [Taiwan's] postponement of the arms procurement package has long annoyed the United States. President Ma has been dodging and shirking the issue since he assumed office, and [his practice] has not only upset Washington but also vaguely implied that because Taiwan is tilting toward China it no longer needs to buy that many weapons. Taiwan's intense reactions during the recent controversy over the Tiaoyutai Islands seemed to indicate that the island no longer cares about the harm [Taiwan's reactions] would do to its relations with Japan. Some people even suggested that Taiwan join hands with China to counterbalance Japan. Does this imply that Taiwan is alienating itself from Japan and starting slowly to tip in favor of China?

"In fact, it is because of Taiwan's special relations with the United States and Japan that China cares so much about Taiwan. The

Ma administration's policy of engaging with China is moving in a correct direction, but the precondition [for such a policy] is that Taiwan's relations with Washington and Tokyo remain resolute and impregnable. If the foundation of [Taiwan's] relations with Washington and Tokyo is dismantled, China will surely do whatever it pleases with Taiwan. [Should that happen,] what bargaining chips will Taiwan still have? The grand strategy for Taiwan should be that it maintain a close relationship with the United States and Japan while befriending China."

C) "Why Not Demonstrate a Broader Strategic Perspective?"

Lai I-chung, former director of the DPP's International Affairs Department and currently a member of the executive board of the Taipei-based public policy research institute Taiwan Thinktank, opined in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (6/16):

"... In fact, proper handling of the issue of the Tiaoyutai Islands will reinforce mutual trust between Taiwan and Japan, and Taiwan and the U.S. Taiwan will be able to face China on a strong and solid base and increase its strategic bargaining chips for negotiation [with China], which will not only expand Taiwan's interests during negotiations, but also help to establish a stable interaction framework across the Strait. This will also necessitate 'the U.S.-Japan security alliance' leaning towards Taiwan. Then, the scene that [former U.S. Secretary of State] Henry Kissinger created in the 1970s, in which the Soviet Union and China competed to maintain relations with the United States, might be replayed in a scene in which the 'U.S.-Japan security alliance' and China compete to maintain relations with Taiwan.

"This also implies that when China tries to maintain its relations with the 'U.S.-Japan security alliance' by restraining itself in [meddling in] the issue of the Tiaoyutai Islands, Taiwan should not reverse and fall into a predicament of facing the United States, Japan and China simultaneously. By handling the issue of the Tiaoyutai Islands prudently and creatively and creating a scenario in which China and the U.S.-Japan security alliance both maintain good relations with Taiwan, it is also very likely that the issue of the Tiaoyutai Islands will be resolved in a way which benefits Taiwan. ..."

YOUNG